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for a socialist and democratic alternative

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IN THIS ISSUE...

Iraq Round Up	3
Hikoi 2004	
Background	6
We talk to Teanau Tuiono	7
Eyewitness Report	8
Budget 2004	
Working for Families?	10
Welfare Policies Compared	11
Civil Union and the Struggle for Gay Marriage	12
In History	
Blair Peach	14
Tiananmen Square: 15 Years On	15
Class Struggle	
Maritime Union Campaign	16
Nurses Campaign	17
AUS Strike!	17
Red Words	
MC S.A.I.D.	18
Wheen on Marx	19
Red & Green	19
Flag Burner Appeals Sentence	20
Letters to the Editor	21

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IRAQ ROUND UP

By Mike Tait



The tales of torture now emerging from Iraq are a grim warning of worse to come. While torture is common in many third world countries, the images of Iraqi prisoners being beaten and humiliated – and of grinning US soldiers – are worse because Bush's last threadbare lie – that Iraq was invaded to set it free – has been stripped away. All that is left is the ugly reality of naked power.



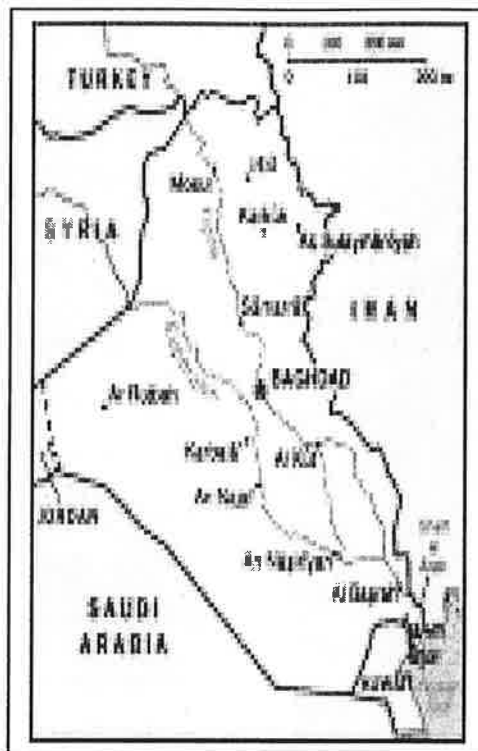
The grudging admission of “abuse” – Rumsfeld said it was not “technically” torture – in the face of photographic evidence follows three years of propaganda aimed at softening the resistance of US citizens to torture. Both conservative and liberal pundits in the US media have claimed schizophrenically that we need to abandon our democratic rights in order to defend them. Opposition to torture has been portrayed simultaneously as what makes us different from Arabs and other savages, but also as liberal squeamishness that stops us from “defeating the terrorists”. The media campaign to legitimise torture showed results. By the time of the Iraq invasion, a Fox News poll showing 42% support for torture on the eve of the invasion of Iraq.

While the media whipped up fear and support for torture, the Bush administration cleared away the legal obstacles. Prisoners captured while defending Afghanistan against the US invasion were declared “illegal combatants”, and not prisoners of war, or criminals. The Geneva Convention was labelled ‘quaint’ and out-of-date, and the administration refused to support the establishment of an international court to try war criminals – or at least refused to allow it to try US citizens for war crimes.

In this climate, the torture in Abu Ghraib was inevitable. The media climate was prepared, the prisoners were in legal limbo, and the soldiers assured of legal immunity. Added to this, US soldiers, who were told to expect a heroes’ welcome from ordinary Iraqis, are under immense stress. Many of the troops in Iraq are reservists. In answering the call-up they are often taking a cut in pay from their regular job, and in many cases also jeopardising that job. US troop levels in Iraq have been maintained by extended tours of duty, which has also hit morale hard.

In a few cases, soldiers have refused to fight. Camillo Mijas, a Nicaraguan citizen serving with the Florida National Guard, was given the maximum sentence for deserting his unit in protest at an ‘oil-driven war’, and at the abuse of prisoners. But Mijas is unusual; his father was a prominent left-wing singer in Nicaragua. Other soldiers, seeing the collapse of the moral case for invasion have reacted by lashing out at ordinary Iraqis.

This is common to colonial wars. Wherever an advanced capitalist country has invaded a weaker country, it has been justified as a moral crusade to uplift the local people. But if the local people rise up, then the frustration felt by soldiers caught on the frontline between the lies of reconstruction or civilisation and the reality of military domination, can well up either against their own officers or in acts of savagery towards civilians and captives.



While brutality against prisoners is nothing new, either in Iraq or in United States itself, these images have destroyed the last justification for the US invasion of Iraq. The supposed liberation of the Iraqi people from fear is now exposed as a lie alongside the lie that Iraq supported the September 11 attack, or that it had a dangerous arsenal of weapons of mass destruction.

Resistance

This can only feed the growth of armed resistance to the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Already, US attempts to crush Sunni resistance in central Iraq have been defeated by the heroic defence of Fallujah, and coalition forces in the south of Iraq are now

facing an armed insurrection from supporters of Shi’ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

From the start, the Bush regime has tried to portray armed resistance as an unholy alliance between the diehard remnants of the Hussein’s Ba’athist party and foreign terrorists. Commanders on the ground have combined massive force with almost non-existent intelligence information to try to suppress the insurrection, with no success – unsurprisingly. In Fallujah, this approach was most evident and most unsuccessful. Less than a month after the invasion, US troops opened fire on a demonstration in Fallujah, killing about fifteen protestors. Since then, the increasingly bitter resistance has been met with increasingly brutal force, with each accidental shooting drawing more Iraqis into the resistance. This process peaked in early May, when US troops, after withdrawing from the city, attempted to retake it in bloody house to house fighting. With food and medical supplies being trucked in from supporters all over Iraq, the people of Fallujah managed to resist the assault. But the cost was steep. After hundreds of

Iraqi civilian casualties and dozens of US deaths, the US handed the operation over to the Iraqi security forces headed by a Hussein-era general. The LA Times wrote in mid-May that Fallujah was, ““for all intents and purposes a rebel town, complete with banners proclaiming a great victory and insurgents integrated into the new Fallujah Brigade—the protective force set up with U.S. assistance to keep the peace.”

In the south, the US and its allies are facing an insurrection that has taken control of Najaf, a holy city for Shi'ite Muslims, and Kufa. Karbala, another city, was apparently recaptured by the US in late May although much of the old city was damaged or destroyed and very few resistance fighters were captured or killed. The south is the heartland of Iraq's Shi'ite population. Under Hussein, the Shi'ites, though a majority of Iraq's population, were shut out of political power. The main Shi'ite leaders, in the hope that they may yet win political power under the US, have so far backed the occupation. But the US failure to support their rebellion against Hussein 13 years ago is still a cause for suspicion. The US has tried to mobilise the Shi'ite establishment against al-Sadr, effectively by threatening them with the destruction of their holy places. But demonstrations called against al-Sadr's militia have met with little or no support. It's still quite possible that al-Sadr will be neutralised – either by being brought into the transitional government, or by being assassinated. But this insurrection has brought the fighting into the previously quiet south, and forged new links with the Sunni resistance fighters.

The UN

Iraq is increasingly being seen as a mistake within US ruling circles. Former US commander in the Middle East and the former chief of the US Central Command Antony Zinni has called Iraq the wrong war at the wrong time with the wrong strategy, and said that the organization of the war was characterized by “at a minimum, true dereliction, negligence, and irresponsibility; at worst, lying, incompetence, and corruption.” But withdrawal is not simple. Iraq was invaded not because it was a threat to the US, but because the US is increasingly turning to military force to make up for long-term economic weakness. Since the 1970s, unquestioned US economic dominance has slowly lost ground to European and Asian powers. Its military power, however, remains unparalleled. The Bush administration has used the September 11 terror attacks to justify the use of this power.

**“the wrong war
at the wrong
time with the
wrong
strategy”**

However, the use of military force only increases instability. The hundreds of small proxy wars fought between the US and the USSR during the Cold War have left many Third World countries greatly weakened. Afghanistan is only the most extreme example of this trend. Free market policies have also gutted many poorer states, leaving

them unable to cope with the basic running of government. The advanced capitalist nations, like the US in Iraq and Australia in East Timor and the Solomons, see the use of force as the only possible solution.

A complete withdrawal from Iraq would leave a gaping hole in the political fabric of the Middle East. If the US does not maintain control, an unstable Iraq could all too easily undermine the fragile Arab dictatorships surrounding it. If the task proves beyond the capacity of the US, then Bush will rediscover the UN, which he scorned as irrelevant before the war. An agreement with the other major powers in the UN Security Council, and clear UN support, would give the occupation more political legitimacy and make possible the support of other countries like Russia, France, and Germany. However, these countries would demand equal opportunities for their own multinationals in Iraq. So while sharing the burden with the UN would reduce the cost of the war for the US, it would also mean sharing the profits.

In the interplay between imperialist powers it's possible for Iraqi leaders to negotiate a better position for themselves, but only on the basis of compromise with one or another imperialist power. We support the resistance of the Iraqi people, whether or not they are led by a dictator or a religious despot, because a defeat for the US and their allies there would weaken the grip of the imperialism in Iraq and elsewhere and discredit military solutions to political problems. Our job is to build an anti-imperialist movement in New Zealand so that we can get NZ troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan – whether they are under UN mandates or not.

**“A complete withdrawal
from Iraq would leave a
gaping hole in the political
fabric of the Middle East.”**

HIKOI 2004

In April-May 2004, Maori and Pakeha from all over New Zealand joined in bold solidarity to oppose the looming Seabed and Foreshore Bill. On arrival, placards, banners and 10,000 people festooned the grounds of parliament. Without any doubt, or recognition by the Prime Minister, the message was clear: 164 years of confiscations, wars, ignorance, racism and assimilation and we have had enough.

Prior to this controversy, the Crown was under the assumption that they alone controlled the property rights to the foreshore and seabed. The Crown based this assumption on New Zealand cases that had applied the British Common Law (e.g. *re Ninety-Mile Beach* [1963]). Thus, upon assuming sovereignty, the Crown could claim ownership of the foreshore and seabed, notwithstanding any existing property rights.

However in 2003 the Court of Appeal found this previous case law was contrary to other well established practices in relation to customary ownership, and allowed the possibility for the Maori Land Court to hear cases relating to Maori customary rights over the foreshore and seabed – under the jurisdiction of Te Ture Whenua Maori Act 1993 (Maori Land Act). Therefore consistent with the common law doctrine of aboriginal title: that customary title continues until clearly extinguished by legislation. *Note that these extinguishments must be done with the consent of the owners and just compensation.* In haste, the government moved to extinguish any customary title by legislation.

This is a racist law. The Bill does not guarantee any public ownership or rights of access to the beach. The only property that the government will seize is Maori customary land. It does not propose to take the 6,032 kilometres of the privately owned coastline. Unsurprisingly, it is a Bill carefully aligned with the economic interests of big companies. Indicative of Labour's steady, but stealthy shift to the right.

The Bill denies Maori of rights guaranteed by the International Declaration of Human Rights. It is denounced by the Waitangi Tribunal as

contrary to Article 2 and Article 3 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It disadvantages Maori who own coastal properties. Furthermore, although the Bill does not preclude Maori access to the courts to establish customary title, if granted, all that Maori will be entitled to is mere compensation. Yet again, another part our land, our Taonga will be taken and exploited.

For over a century, the New Zealand public have been misled and misinformed by the media, the state-school system, and Parliament. These are used as a tools to turn middle NZ against Maori. The truth is, New Zealand, and its 19,883 kilometres of 'foreshore' were actually never under threat. This Bill has nothing to do with access to the beaches. It is about ownership and control of resources. Not once have Ngati Tuwharetoa denied the public access to Lake Taupo to which they 'own'.

This Bill does not only disadvantage Maori, but it expounds the willingness to rob everyday New Zealanders of the rights guaranteed by the common law in order to suit the interests of big business. And to ignore the voices of thousands disadvantaged by the evils of the system.

For Maori and Non-Maori alike this hikoi was a powerful demonstration of solidarity, calling for recognition of *people*, their pride, and their worth. We will be further oppressed and ignored. It is time for the working class, regardless of race, to unite.

SOCIALIST REVIEW TALKS TO TEANAU TUIONO

Activist Teanau Tuiono is a member of a collective that organised the Hikoi in Wellington. He spoke to Shomi Yoon about the Hikoi and Maori politics today.

To a lot of us the Hikoi seemed to have sprung up over night. What was the behind-the-scenes organisation that went into it?

The original call for the Hikoi came from Ngati Kahungunu after the overwhelming tribal opposition to the Labour consultation rounds. We were planning the Hikoi for months with the intention of supporting the initiative of Ngati Kahungunu. Government had been coy about when the first reading was actually going to happen and people were frantically ringing around the country so that a Hikoi could be called to coincide with that day. Ngati Kahungunu took the bull by the horns months in advance and decided to Hikoi to Wellington for May 5th. So in Wellington we had been advertising the Hikoi

from March though the usual activist channels like supportive radio stations, Indymedia, pickets, info stalls, public meetings and music gigs. The whanau from te Taitokerau decided three weeks from May 5th date to come to Wellington as well. From there things in organisational sense took to a frantic pace. This became clearer because the Wellington collective along with some of the Aotearoa Maori Internet Organisation were running the Hikoi websites and putting out the press releases and the night before the Auckland Harbour Bridge crossing our website <http://aotearoa.wellington.net.nz/takutai/> got 10,000 hits. As soon as we saw this we knew it was going to be big.



This was the largest political Maori gathering in many years. Do you think that there were wider social issues than the foreshore and seabed?

The comments of Don Brash's speech in Orewa and then Helen Clark's play of the race card tit-for-tat pissed people off.

The Waitangi Tribunal for the first time in history found that there had been a Breach of Article Three. Article Three is the one that says all Maori have a right to access public institutions like schools, hospitals, the courts and that sort of thing.

That the government could break this and discriminate against Maori should be outrageous to anybody Pakeha or Maori. It's the end of freedom of speech. What if the Government ruled that Americans living in New Zealand had no access to the courts? It would create an uproar. Previously Maori had been protesting against American ownership of the foreshore of Young Nicks Head. Maori were protecting the control of New Zealand soil and yet there was silence from mainstream New Zealand. Yet let there be just a snippet that Maori may actually own the foreshore and a large section of pakeha

society is outraged. So its fine for Americans to own the foreshore but not Maori? For me this points to the inherent racism that is as much part of New Zealand culture as No 8 wire. New Zealand has a lot of issues but when it comes to being confronted by this issues they are often swept under the carpet. The other major issue is that NZ governments have a history of selling off public ownership whether that is the railways or electric power lines. Anyone remember the selling off of state owned assets in the 1980s? We can't trust them to own the foreshore and seabed "publicly".

What's your view of the Maori party?

There's a perception that everyone that went on the Hikoi must support the Maori Party - that's not true. I'm still wary. I'm waiting to see the actual membership of it. If its going to be rightwing like NZ First or sitting on the fence like Mana Motuhake then I've got no time for them. There are some worthwhile people in it like Tariana Turia and Matt McCarten, but the harder the left the better. Putting trust in one politician makes bad politics - it's like putting all your eggs in one basket. People have been let down time and time again by doing this. The main outcome of the Hikoi shouldn't be on the

A DAY I'LL NEVER FORGET...

Sam's impressions of the Hikoi

On the 5th of May, I was one of the 20,000 or so who took part in the large seabed and foreshore Hikoi. Initially, I was not 100% sure exactly where I stood on the issue and went down just to see what was really going on. I basically got down the hill and found half the roads blocked off even before the march got there. I stood with a crowd of about 200 mostly Maori but also with a significant number of Pakeha as well awaiting the front of the march to go past. As the front of the march approached, the group broke out into a spontaneous haka, and one could feel the atmosphere becoming more and more electric with each passing minute. After the front of the march led by Pita Sharples passed, I joined in the crowd about 2 or 3 thousand back.

From here it took well over an hour to reach Parliament and on the way, everyone was watching from shop fronts and office windows. It was definitely NOT business as usual in Wellington that morning! I will never forget the feeling as the march approached the cenotaph just below the beehive, being surrounded by a crowd clearly in a carnival mood, but very staunch in opposition to Labour's policy towards the seabed and foreshore.

Despite the nature of the politics, and the reformist or downright opportunistic nature of the Hikoi leaders, the rank and file of the Hikoi was overwhelmingly working class. It was this factor which for me made it a day which I will never forget; maybe this was a tiny glimmer of what socialism may look like in the future!

Maori Party but on how to engage the mass of people and step up the politics; not just a cultural bi-culturalism but a political bi-culturalism. The success of the day in Wellington was all due to the little people. Without support from the little people Wellington could have denigrated into the circus that is frequently held at Waitangi every year. Wellington should pat itself on the back because without the marae, churches, womens groups, activist, unions, student and other community groups it would have been so difficult to organise Tino Rangatiratanga events here in Wellington, and a fair part of the Wellington Maori society is conservative in a political sense. There are more right-wing, ACT, National voting Maori living here than anywhere else in the country. I call them conservative because if Tino Rangatiratanga is a Maori movement it is the conservatives who will always advocate the smallest amount of movement possible. Having said that, to their credit they were also on the streets that day. But yeah the day was a victory for the Maori people, and celebration of unity and kotahitanga

The roots of hiphop, dancehall and reggae came out of revolutionary beginnings, like most things in todays world, dance parties have been commercialised, capitalised, and corporatised. we want to bring the party scene back to its roots as a revolutionary force of beats and breaks... bleeps and squeaks in the face of authority that is destroying our environment and the people that depend on it for their survival,

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Working for Families?

Brian Roper reviews Budget 2004

Budget 2004, like *Budget 2000*, outlines the Government's intended policy direction over a four-year period. The central initiative of *Budget 2004* is the *Working for Families* programme. According to Finance Minister Cullen, this programme "makes tangible our commitment to ensuring that economic growth is pursued for its capacity to provide greater security and opportunity for all". Anticipating fiscal surpluses of between \$5.7 and \$5.0 billion from 2004/5 to 2007/8, the Government promised to deliver a "social dividend to low- and middle-income families".

"Nearly 300,000 households will receive direct assistance by 1 April 2007. Over 60% of families with dependent children will benefit from the combination of increases to Family Support, a new In-Work Payment, the increase in Family Tax Credit and changes to abatement rates and thresholds. The average gain for these families is \$66 per week. Households in the \$25,000 to \$45,000 a year income range will benefit on average by around \$100 a week".

The Government claims that these measures will reduce child poverty by 30%. It also announced increased funding for early childhood education, tertiary student allowances, health, state housing, and assistance to business. Another \$2.1 billion was transferred to the Superannuation Fund in 2004/5, and the Government forecast that the fund would total \$15.5 billion by June 2008. This would be sufficient to reduce net government debt to zero since gross debt would roughly equal financial assets.

Although this might sound generous, in reality the *Working for Families* programme is not. At best it gives back a small fraction of the real disposable income lost by low- and middle-income earners as a consequence of the Fourth Labour Government's regressive taxation reforms, which increased the amount of tax paid by low- and middle-income earners and reduced the tax paid by the rich and the Fourth National Government's 1991 benefit cuts.

The programme provides income and accommodation supplements to the working poor in order to ensure that "people are better off by being in work and are rewarded for their work effort". This conveniently sidesteps the issue of why a substantial section of the paid labour-force receives low incomes. A major reason is that the industrial relations system created by the ECA and retained by this Government, has removed union and award protection for large sections of the labour-force, allowing employers to drive down wages. The poverty of those in paid work should be addressed by reforming the industrial relations system in order to enable unions to increase their membership and bargaining power. As it is, the provision of income supplements to the working poor indirectly subsidises employers who are paying low wages.

Although the programme does increase support to beneficiaries, the primary emphasis is on supporting those with low incomes in paid employment. Thus the standard neoliberal emphasis on providing beneficiaries with monetary incentives to 'get off welfare' and enter paid employment remains, with the corresponding devaluation of unpaid work in the home that is disproportionately performed by women.

The amount of money that is being directed towards reducing child poverty is small in both absolute terms and as percentage of total government expenditure. For example, support for 'working families' is forecast to be \$211 million and 0.4% of total government expenditure in 2004/5, \$664 million and 1.2% in 2005/6, \$900 million and 1.5% in 2006/7 and \$1,125 million and 1.8% in 2007/8. During the same period taxation revenue is expected to grow at the same rate as expenditure, so at best income is being redistributed within the working class, rather than from the richest 10% to the poor. Even worse, the programme is only fully funded in 2007/8. This is *after the 2005 election* and so contingent upon Labour being re-elected. Also, if the forecast economic slowdown is more severe than expected, and the fiscal surplus evaporates, it is likely that the Government would reduce its spending in this area

Comparing Apples with... Apples?

Gerry Cotterell examines the welfare policies of National & Labour

The recent releases of welfare policy by Labour and National provides us with an opportunity to assess the similarities and differences in their respective positions. National's proposed welfare policy is contained in their discussion paper titled "Saving the Next Generation from Welfare Dependency", released in May 2003. Labour's welfare policy was, of course, released as part of the 2004 Budget and is labeled "Working for Families".

National's policy was released in the form of a discussion document and gives a clear guide to their thinking about public welfare provision. Among the key features are reinstating work-for-the-dole along with work-testing, the specification and strengthening of obligations which benefit recipients must comply with and the proposed introduction of time limited benefits.

The arguments in the National document are constructed using leading statements and questions that guide the reader to predetermined positions (much as did the Code of Social Responsibility produced under the last National Government). The document also contains a series of one-sided citations, mainly obtained from conservative American think tanks, such as the Heritage Foundation, extolling the virtues of the recent US welfare reform.

Overall, the document shows how little National welfare policy has changed since the early 1990s when Jenny Shipley produced "Welfare that Works" as part of the 1991 budget. Many of the key themes of Welfare that Works are repeated, including the need to have a wide gap between benefit payments and wages in order to encourage people to find work, and the need to have people undertake some form of work in return for benefits assistance.

The welfare policies announced by the Labour party in the 2004 Budget were argued to be a reward or social dividend for low and middle income earners

after years of stagnant or declining income during the late 80s and 1990s. The policy announcements focused on increased spending on families with dependent children, spread over the coming 3 years. While both beneficiaries and low to middle income earners receive increase in financial support the assistance is slanted towards those in paid work who receive around 2/3 of the total new spending.

When examining the two sets of policy an interesting series of similarities and differences are revealed. The similarities are most clear around the issue of paid work. Both Labour and National argue that the path out of what they call benefit dependency is through paid work (no mention of the fact that much work is low paid and does not lift the wage earner from a poverty level lifestyle!). Both parties see the need to maintain a significant gap between wages and benefits in order to 'encourage' people into paid work. Finally, both propose the continued subsidization of low wages by the state – a form of corporate welfare dependency which receives little mention. So instead of employers paying decent wages, the government provides tax credits to those employees in low paid jobs.

National policy differs from that proposed by Labour in the following areas. First, National is floating the idea of time limiting some types of benefits, citing evidence from the recent welfare reforms in the USA to justify this. Second, National is seeking to reinstate work-for-the-dole – arguing that this will help reduce the number of beneficiaries. Third, National is seeking to privatize provision of some services to beneficiaries and fourth National places considerably more emphasis on obligations of beneficiaries need to fulfill in order to receive benefits. These obligations are identified as requiring their children to participate in education, having their children immunized, and the provision of fathers names to MSD in order to claim the full amount of support.

What is clear from the policy platforms of Labour and National is that the principles underlying public welfare provision in New Zealand identified by the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security no longer hold. These principles stated that recipients of welfare should enjoy a standard of living much like that of the rest of the community" which would allow them to "belong and participate" in their communities. Being in receipt of a benefit these days means you are viewed as a second class citizen, one who is denied the necessary financial support to participate in you local community, no matter which of the two major parties are in power.

CIVIL UNION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR GAY MARRIAGE

For socialists the Civil Union Bill is a welcome development. The Bill will enable thousands of gays and lesbians in New Zealand to gain a civil union that will give the same rights as a heterosexual marriage. In other words, all relationships whether same sex, or opposite sex, married, civil union or de facto couples will be entitled to the same rights and benefits that are currently open only to married couples.

Up until now there has been blatant discrimination against same sex couples within NZ law. There are about 100 laws that exclude same-sex couples. It is not uncommon to hear horror stories of gay partners being denied visiting rights for their partner in hospital or viewing rights to see their partner's body in a mortuary because they are not considered 'next of kin'. The reforms that the Civil Union Bill and its sister Omnibus Bill will bring will spell an end to this kind of discrimination.

It is not surprising to hear that institutions like New Zealand's Catholic Church, Maxim Institute and Peter Dunne's United Future party are up in arms about this Bill. Their criticisms range from the Biblical crank views of same-sex couples being 'unnatural' to their objections that civil unions will 'extend the rights and privileges of marriage to same-sex couples, without calling it marriage'. At its base, their problem is that allowing the Civil Union Bill to pass will somehow erode the 'special relationship' of marriage.

Unfortunately all the facts about the 'special relationship' of marriage point to a marriage from hell. According to the 2002 Census statistics while there were 20 700 registered marriages in that year, there were also 10,300 registered divorces (and this number

doesn't even include the large number of heterosexual couples that don't even bother with marriage). It is also widely acknowledged that the greatest physical, mental and sexual abuse against women and children takes place in the confines of the very same family institution that the Christian Right claim to uphold.

There is however one contradictory aspect that both defenders and opponents of the Civil Union Bill seem to be talking over one another. The defenders are at pains to point out that the Civil Union Bill *IS NOT* gay marriage. Gay Labour MP Tim Barnett is a strong advocate for this view. He goes all out to make it clear that marriage remains marriage, and civil union is a new and distinct thing that is quite separate from marriage. Whereas the opponents of the Civil Union Bill would have it that 'civil unions *is* same-sex marriage'.

But what the Civil Union Bill effectively will do is *ban* gay marriages. Rather than gay marriage or civil union being a choice for gay and lesbian couples to choose, they will now have civil union or nothing.

Furthermore if Labour believes that civil union is marriage by another name, the question must be posed as to why Labour has gone all out to create a separate civil union that is 'the same' as marriage. David Young rightly criticises Labour's stance in the *Listener*.

Heterosexual couples wishing to commit to each other will have two options: marriage or a civil union. Same-sex couples will continue to be barred from marriage, but will be allowed to 'register' their union.



Barnett's web site concedes that the civil union option is a 'politically achievable' and 'pragmatic' solution that has been chosen because a majority of MPs might support it, but are believed to oppose gay marriage.

David Young unfortunately falls into the camp of opposing the Civil Union Bill because of these reasons. He slightly misses the point however, because it is through struggle that these aims could potentially be challenged and therefore changed. If the Civil Union Bill campaign picks up, it is through a militant, vibrant and multi-sexual movement that could potentially push the Civil Union Bill beyond Labour's 'politically achievable' goals to encompass marriage itself. This is the kind of struggle that is taking place in the U.S as we print. There the gay civil rights movement that has burst on the scenes is calling for the slogan of 'Separate [civil union] is not Equal'. It is this kind of momentum that we must build for real equality for same-sex marriages.

Why is this a struggle for us all? Some people on the left will say that since marriage is a bourgeois institution, radicals should oppose the Civil Union Bill.

True, marriage is a legal contract that binds two people in a relationship of property rights. As socialists, we are fighting for a future society in which people's sexual lives would be a purely personal issue, with living arrangements free of any material constraints and interference by the state.

But like the fight for the right to vote in elections, civil union is a fight for equality, democracy and basic human dignity. And while there are politicians that are worth supporting on this particular issue, to limit it to civil unions is not enough. The call for civil unions must be made alongside the call for gay and lesbian couples to marry if they so wish.

Discrimination against gays and lesbians is pervasive in N.Z society and like all forms of discrimination, weakens the ability for workers to unite in struggle. A class divided will not be prepared to win the battles ahead. With marriage rights, gays and lesbians could participate more fully in - and therefore strengthen - class battles for reforms such as family leave, pensions and health care benefits.

What's more, the seemingly radical argument against civil union ends by being indifferent to the real material benefits for working class gays and lesbians. Though marriage accepts certain norms and pitfalls of bourgeois society, it also cuts through the hypocrisy of family values and opens the door to ideas about new forms of social organisation. That's why the right wing is so threatened by it.

Those who claim the battle for civil union as simply an embrace of bourgeois morality, or the flip side of this, that civil union is simply not embracing marriage enough, are missing the context in which this fight is taking place. The potential for mobilising people outraged by the right wing Christian bigots exists in the fight for the Civil Union Bill today, moreover, we can push the limits of Labour's own civil union to embrace gay marriage itself.

Shomi Yoon

THE POLICE HIT HIM WITH A LEAD- FILLED COSH!

Blair Peach: NZer Killed in London, 1979

"AS THE police rushed past him, one of them hit him on the head with the stick. I was in my garden and saw this quite clearly. He was left sitting against the wall. He tried to get up, but he was shivering and looked very strange. He couldn't stand. Then the police came back and told him, 'Move! Come on, move!' They were very rough with him and I was shocked because it was clear he was seriously hurt."

This was the shocking testimony of Southall resident Parminder Atwal, one of the witnesses to the murder of Blair Peach at the hands of the Metropolitan Police on 23 April 1979. Last Friday, 25 years after his murder, a piece of artwork was unveiled and a memorial meeting held in the area where he was killed.

Blair was an east London teacher who had come over from New Zealand. He was also a member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Anti Nazi League. He was killed protesting at the Nazi National Front (NF), which was holding a meeting in the predominantly Asian area of Southall, west London. His police killers still walk free.

The National Front had announced it would hold a "general election" meeting in Ealing Town Hall on Monday 23 April 1979. Local people were appalled. They knew that fascist meetings bring

fascist violence. Three years earlier an NF-inspired gang had stabbed Gurdip Singh Chaggar to death in Southall.

But the local Tory council gave the Nazis Ealing town hall to meet in. Local people did all they could to get the meeting banned. The day before 5,000 people marched to the Town Hall.

Southall Anti Nazi League activist Balwinder Rana recalls, "The march was attacked by the police, who picked fights all along the way." The then Labour home secretary, Merlyn Rees, refused to ban the meeting. Three thousand police, with dogs, horses, riot vans, a helicopter and units of the notorious Special Patrol Group poured into Southall.

At lunchtime Southall's shops closed in protest at the Nazi meeting. Some factories shut down and Asian workers at nearby Heathrow airport walked out. Anti-Nazis arrived in Southall in solidarity. At around 3.30pm some demonstrators tried to get on a bus going through the police cordon. The police threw everyone off. Those arrested included Mr Rihal, on his way home to look after his wife who had just left hospital.

The police later lied and said he had damaged the bus. He got three months in jail. As Balwinder recalls, "At about 6.30pm people started to go towards the town hall. Suddenly the cordon parted and police on horseback came through and started to hit people with long batons. They attacked men, women and children." Police vans speeded through the hemmed-in crowd.

Inside the Nazi meeting the local NF candidate was pledging to "bulldoze Southall to the ground and replace it with an English hamlet". People outside were confronted with a full-blown police riot. The Daily Telegraph recorded what happened:

"Within three minutes mounted police had cornered about 50 demonstrators against the churchyard walls. As we watched, several demonstrators were dragged crying and screaming to the nearby police station. Nearly every demonstrator had blood flowing from some injury."

The police surrounded 6 Park Road, which been designated a first aid and advice centre. The police kicked the door in and forced everyone to run a gauntlet of truncheon blows to get out.

Local activist Clarence Baker had been told earlier by the police, "You black bastard. We are going to get you." He remembered, "About six were hitting me with their truncheons. I felt one blow. I did not feel anything after that."

Clarence ended up in intensive care with a blood clot on his brain. At least three protesters were hit so hard their skulls fractured. Blair Peach was one of them. "At least two Special Patrol Group vans came up," remembers Blair's friend Jo Lang, who chaired last week's memorial meeting. The officers got out and charged us. We ran, but Blair wasn't with us. So we went back to look for him. An Asian family had taken him into their living room. You couldn't see how badly injured he was. It was later said that he was hit with a lead-filled cosh. While he was in the ambulance he started having fits. At 12 o'clock they phoned and told us he was dead."

News of his death sent shock waves through the British working class. The day before he was buried 4,000 local Asian people filed past Blair Peach as he lay in Southall's Dominion Cinema. Throughout the night Southall youth maintained a guard of honour over him. The next day the cortege travelled to east London.

Bengali people from Brick Lane, who Blair had stood with against Nazi terror, paid their respects. There were 13 national union banners on the 10,000-strong funeral procession. TUC president Ken Gill spoke at the graveside alongside Tony Cliff of the SWP.

When the lockers and some houses of Special Patrol Group members were later searched coshes, knives, bayonets, swords and Nazi regalia were found. The unit was later disbanded. But since then the police have been consistently deployed to defend Nazi events: from Bradford to Welling in south London, and in Birmingham and Manchester last weekend.

Source: Socialist Worker (UK)



TIANANMEN SQUARE: 15 YEARS ON

In 1989 the Chinese ruling class ordered the massacre of protestors, students and workers in and around Tiananmen Square towards the end of their heroic movement for greater democratic freedoms and workers' control.

The movement around the Tiananmen Square revolt was one of the biggest China had seen in many years and, crucially, showed up cracks in the Stalinist monolith running China and reaffirmed the power of mass action. The Berlin Wall fell in Germany, precipitating the inspiring revolutions that swept away decades of Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe – Tiananmen Square and its supporting strikes and solidarity actions offered a glimpse of what could shake China.

In 2002 workers in the northern city of Liaoyang organised protests 50 000 strong against layoffs and repression. They took their inspiration from the Tiananmen protests: we should too.

Dougal McNeill



MARITIME UNION LAUNCHES NATIONALIST CAMPAIGN

Like most trade unions, the Maritime Union is fighting to ensure its long-term survival. Since Labour slashed thousands of jobs in the 80s, and National hobbled trade unions with the Employment Contracts Act, casual or part time work has almost become the norm in New Zealand. According to Trevor Hanson, MUNZ general secretary, 46 percent of workers are part time or casual – especially in the private sector. The Maritime Union is the heir to the Waterfront Workers Union and the Seafarers Union, two of the most left wing, democratic, and militant trade unions in New Zealand.

But even this union has been feeling the pinch as stevedoring companies such as Mainland Stevedoring have launched concerted attacks on the union – bringing in casual scab labour to take work from unionists, with the aim of ultimately forcing all waterfront workers to accept casual contracts. Hanson, along with national president Philip Adams and vice-president Joe Fleetwood, was in Port Chalmers in early June to tell rank and file members about the response cooked up by the national body to deal with this threat.

There are many different angles that the bureaucracy's proposes to pursue, but all roads apparently lead in the end to Parliament. Instead of tackling casualisation directly, the union leadership plans to lobby for legal changes to safeguard maritime jobs. The key reform would be a return to preferential treatment for New Zealand-wider region. Hanson said that China's trade was growing by 30 percent per year, and that millions of new maritime workers – with no union protection – were being trained to serve this trade. Filipino sailors, previously among the lowest paid group, were taking pay cuts to stay competitive with Chinese labour, Fleetwood said.

But the union bureaucracy's response to this intensification of competition and exploitation is simply to try to run away and insulate New Zealand capitalism. In the long run, cutting a deal with NZ businesses will require the gutting of workplace militancy and quite possibly jobs as well, and the undermining of the union's ability to

owned shipping within New Zealand waters, a system apparently known as cabotage, but economic protectionism would fit the bill just as well. The union argues that this would prevent the super-exploitation of sailors from poor countries within New Zealand waters and increase job security for New Zealander workers. MUNZ is aware that cabotage would also benefit NZ corporates, like Mainfreight. Despite some dark mutterings about taking on the employers, both Hanson and Fleetwood referred positively to cooperation with corporates on ideas for cadetship schemes and on lobbying parliament.

Underlying the campaign is a sense of urgency. As Fleetwood said, "to do nothing is not an option." But what the union are doing is effectively trying to insulate NZ capitalism from changes taking place in the fight. This will inevitably be followed sooner or later by the repeal of cabotage and the influx of foreign corporates, and lower wages. There's also the danger that the union's appeal for cabotage will fan the flames of anti-Asian racism.

What's needed is an international strategy, to make links with Asian workers and aggressively promote unionism throughout South East Asia. Such a strategy wouldn't bring high-profile results like the passing of a law or the establishment of a union-employer-government training institute, but the results that it would bring can't be snatched away by a change in governments.

Otago University Staff Strike!

Following the continued failure of university management to settle their pay dispute quickly and fairly, Association of University Staff (AUS) members voted to strike for the second time in the history of the University of Otago (the last time was in September 2002). They walked off the job at 12.15pm on the 3rd of June. At least 400 members and supporters marched for two hours around the University campus, chanting and playing musical instruments.

We marched up Cumberland Street, through the St David lecture theatre building and over the bridge to the Registry. Although a little slow, the crossing of the bridge was significant as it highlighted the hypocrisy of University management who are willing to spend exorbitant amounts of money on a bridge while ignoring the more immediate needs of staff and students, as fees rise and pay is eroded by inflation.

Typical of academics, the chants had a certain ring. By the time we reached the Registry, we politely suggested that "We want to register – Our displeasure!". Union members surrounded the Clocktower before setting off for the library, where senior university management were trying in vain to staff the library desks. The picketers marched silently through the library to demonstrate to management their solidarity and the fact that they are not going away. Industrial action is expected to continue.



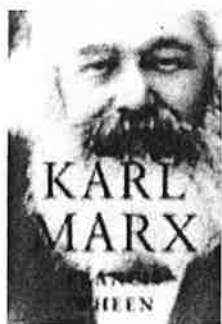
STRUGGLE...

MASSIVE VOTE FOR FAIR PAY CAMPAIGN

Nurses and midwives committed themselves and their union, the New Zealand Nurses Union (NZNO), to pursuing pay equity and safe staffing levels in a nearly unanimous national ballot in late May.

NZNO spokesperson Laila Harré said the result was an average of 98% in favour across the 21 District Health Boards, ranging from 94% in one DHB to 100% in another. The votes were counted on Friday after 11 days of voting in hospitals around the country. Laila Harré said strong support was also demonstrated by a strong turnout, particularly in the Auckland area where around 70% of NZNO members participated in the vote. Poor pay and understaffing are turning people away from nursing careers, NZNO advocate Glenda Alexander said, with the average age of nurses at 45-years-old and increasing. Reducing workloads and increasing pay to comparable levels with other careers was crucial, Glenda Alexander said. "We've been using police and teachers as comparators for pay equity, because they are jobs with similar standing in the community". Nurses got an especially raw deal in comparison with police, who unlike teachers or nurses do not do degree level training, Glenda Alexander said. "Police do only six months training during which they are paid at the same level as nurses are paid when they graduate, after having paid for their own education. It shows how little women's work is valued." The NZNO is conscious that with 30'000 members, 20'000 of who are covered by the same collective contract, it is in a strong position to change this. Glenda Alexander hopes that any success in this campaign will flow onto other working women. The strong vote coming into negotiations showed nurses' and midwives' determination, but the campaign had also met with public support, with 130,000 signatures collected for a fair pay petition. Negotiations will begin in mid-July.

RED WORDS



KARL MARX

Francis Wheen

(Fourth Estate, 2000)

Reviewed by Shaun Presow

It is often easy to lose sight of the fact that Karl Marx was an actual man, and faced problems like any other person. Yet in this biography of Marx the author sets out to rediscover the man behind the centuries of acclaim and vilification. The major strength of this book is the characterisation of Marx and the humanity that lies behind the theory. The devastation that Marx felt with the loss of his son Edgar, the suffering of almost continual illness and the grind of poverty are all revealed, allowing a portrait of the man to be built up.

The book also serves to dispel some popular myths about Marx. Many believe that Marx was indifferent to the Paris Commune or its achievements, yet Wheen shows that Marx was passionately interested. The reason Marx was so late in releasing his brilliant pamphlet "The Civil War in France" was because of him suffering from bronchitis and liver trouble, not because of any perceived apathy. The book also delves into the problems with Bakunin, and his attempted takeover of the International Working Men's Association. Marx however refused to allow this and moved the International to New York, to prevent Bakunin from splitting it again.

Wheen also briefly explores Marx's ideas and their basis. These explorations are quite simplistic and could stand to be further expounded. This is not necessarily a bad thing however, as the author states himself that the book is a biography of Marx, not of Marxism. Some interesting conclusions are made, such as a link between the young philosopher Marx and the old political economist Marx. For Wheen this consists of the "Grundrisse" writings, which he believes fall between "Capital" and other earlier writings.

This book is an excellent read however, and shows Marx the man behind Marx the thinker. It is a book that will leave you wanting to know more. This is not a book worth reading for theoretical work of Marx, but provides an interesting and entertaining look at the man.

Red And Green:

the NZ Journal of Left Alternatives (1 & 2)

Reviewed by Dougal McNeill

The Alliance party, re-examining its roots and direction after a disastrous 2002 election, has recently launched the journal Red and Green in order to "help build the intellectual culture essential to the development of the Left." This is certainly a vital project and, going on the first two volumes, Red and Green should become an excellent resource. Its pages are packed with debate, ideas and, crucially, facts: revealing the realities of poverty, inequality and injustice in our society.

While launched and sponsored by the Alliance, Red and Green reaches out to all thinkers and activists on the Left. In the second volume, Green MP Sue Bradford provides a damning analysis of Labour's anti-beneficiary 'Jobs Jolt' programme, while Liz Gordon and Janet McAllister compile facts on poverty, especially child poverty, that are hidden in mainstream political sources.

Issue one examines Bush's imperialist war for oil in the Middle East and New Zealand's role in supporting the US. Nicky Hager documents NZ's secret military support in the Afghanistan occupation, while Mike Treen and Keith Locke dissect Labour's role in Iraq. The articles are filled with ideas we can use in our day-to-day work convincing people here of the government's complicity in foreign wars.

Of course, no left journal would be complete without debate; Red and Green sets itself the task of trying to think through the future of socialism in this country. In the first issue, Quentin Findlay presents his vision for a rebuilt Alliance, while in the second, Trevor Landers offers an obituary for Marxism. Trevor presents an unconvincing caricature of Marxism; he hasn't engaged with Marxism in New Zealand (such as Brian Roper's use of class analysis in *The Political Economy of New Zealand*). But the debate is important, these are arguments that need to be thought through and carried out, and it is excellent that Red and Green exists as a space for the left to do this.

There is much more to these two journals than I have space to discuss, from biculturalism to book reviews, poetry and interviews, and most of it is of great interest. All readers of Socialist Review should get copies of Red and Green and, hopefully, we will watch this journal develop into a real resource for the whole left.

Copies are available for \$10 or a four-issue subscription for \$40. In Wellington contact John Anderson: john@eclectic.org.nz and in Dunedin Sam Huggard: sam.huggard@alliance.org.nz.

Q. Who is in MC S.A.I.D.? Where does the name come from, and what brought you together? What have you done and what do you aim to do?

S.A.I.D has two meanings: Sanctions Against Imperialist Domination, but also comes from the Palestinian thinker Edward W. Said. We have been constantly gigging around Te Wai Pounamu, but we aim to gig up North. S.A.I.D's aim is to inform the masses about issues we feel are not being properly addressed. S.A.I.D is the people's media; we're the CNN, BBC, TV3 and TV1 of society's forgotten.

Q. What's the relationship between the music and the message?

Rap music is best medium to reach the forgotten people, especially the rakatahi, they love rap. So we look to feed our political views-anti-imperialist - into the music.

MC S.A.I.D. MUSIC WITH A MESSAGE

MC S.A.I.D. is a Dunedin-based rap crew. It's also an "in-your-face ethnological critique of what it's like to be young and Maori growing up in a so-called democracy", says Matt Matahaere—who, with DJ Loki makes up the group. But being young and Maori doesn't mean being unaware; the 'said' in the band's name refers to Edward Said, a passionate defender of Palestinian rights and incisive critic of Western imperialism.

Q. What does Said – a Palestinian academic - have to do with Aotearoa? What is Orientalism about?

We view Edward Said's critiques as very conducive to Aotearoa/Te Wai Pounamu. Like the Palestinian people and other indigenous people's around the world, our land was also taken from us; our cultures destroyed and our people assimilated into a Pakeha view of the world. Orientalism was a very instrumental piece of literature for S.A.I.D; one only has to look at how Maori people are represented by the media, either as dole bludgers, rapists or killers. Fuck that, we're a beautiful people, Pakeha can continue to teach the rakatahi that we're ugly, but we aint. This is a standard of the coloniser, teaching indigenous people's to hate themselves. We aint listening, one only has to read Frantz Fanon 'The Wretched of the Earth'.

Q. You've said that gangsta rapper Tupac Shakur is a big influence. How politically onto it was he though?
He said the reason I call myself a thug is because I's born in the gutter and I'm still here. When he said thug he meant anything that didn't fit the norm. Anything oppositional is gangsta. The media call people like Tupac gangsters, when they're much worse. Tupac took thug, and nigger, and gangster, and reappropriated it. Made it something to be proud of. Tupac was also bringing a huge background in politics to his music. His mum was a Black Panther, and his uncle was put in jail by COINTELPRO [the FBI program that targeted political dissidents in the 60s and 70s]. It's true though that white corporate interests run with gangsta rap and try and make a buck off it.

Q. Where's the music at in Aotearoa? You've met a few of the 'names' of NZ hip-hop, where are they at in terms of political consciousness?

Rap music is a big fusion of swing and jazz, 60s R&B, the whole lot. A lot of rappers are politically conscious, Check Scribe 'The Crusader', that's one big thesis on what it's like to be young, black and living in this so-called democracy. Cats like PNC from the Breakinwreckwords camp is mad political!

Q. Where are you from, what brought you to the music, and to politics?

S.A.I.D are Takata Te Whenua, Kai Tahu taku Iwi. We're local to the bone sunshine, Te Wai Pounamu represent for sure! The assimilation and destruction of my people were the defining points for our politics. We just bought that into our music. Like our Irish comrades we going to bring the noise to the Crown ya heard!

MC S.A.I.D. WILL BE PLAYING NEXT IN DUNEDIN ON JULY 30 AT RE:FUE

FLAG BURNER APPEALS SENTENCE

PUTTING BILL OF RIGHTS ACT TO THE TEST.

The appeal against conviction and sentence of Jared Phillips and Paul Hopkinson were heard in the Wellington High Court earlier this month. Mark Lilico represented Phillips while Anthony Shaw who is a member of the law faculty at Victoria University represented Hopkinson. Both were convicted in the Wellington District Court last year. The pair and several other activists were arrested while attending a Parliament antiwar protest which coincided with the visit of Australian Prime Minister John Howard last March.

Phillips who threw a plastic bag containing leaf mulch towards Howard's motorcade was convicted for disorderly behaviour. Phillips' counsel submitted the offence was so minor it did not warrant the intervention of the criminal law and that his treatment by the police following arrest was an extra-judicial punishment.

Hopkinson made national news and caused reactionary hysteria when he put a match to a kerosene soaked New Zealand flag. He was convicted of an offence against the Flags, Symbols and Names Protection Act after a right-wing radio announcer made a complaint to the police. The Muldoon era legislation creates the criminal offence of "dishonouring the New Zealand flag".

Hopkinson's appeal is based on the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990. The Act is a basic assertion of democratic rights and freedoms including rights outlined in international treaties to which the New

Zealand Government is a signatory. Section 6 of the Act states:

Whenever an enactment can be given a meaning that is consistent with the rights and freedoms contained in this Bill of Rights, that meaning shall be preferred to any other meaning.

Mr Shaw for the appellant Hopkinson submitted that interpretations other than dishonouring the flag were properly available. The interpretation that limited Hopkinson's section 14 freedom of expression right the least should be preferred by the Court. Such an interpretation would not criminalise his behaviour, as he did not "dishonour the flag". Shaw invited the Court to set aside the conviction.

The Crown argued other interpretations were still a form of dishonouring and were intended to be criminalised by the Act. In the alternative Shaw asked the Court to make a declaration that the statute was inconsistent with the Bill of Rights Act 1990. Such a declaration would have no outcome on Hopkinson's conviction, but would merely be a statement from the judge that the statute was inconsistent with rights guaranteed by the Bill Rights.

The decision of the judge was reserved probably for several months. It is likely Hopkinson's appeal will be taken further, to the Court of Appeal or ultimately the new Supreme Court. Both Phillips and Hopkinson are members of the Anti-Capitalist Alliance (ACA).

Peter Broad

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

30TH JUNE 2004



Join with millions of people
around the world to protest
against the US led war in Iraq

Demand the NZ government
bring our troops home

Insist that the 'Coalition of the
Willing' treat soldiers and
civilians with respect

LOOK FOR ACTIONS IN YOUR AREA!!!

Letters

We welcome your feedback. Please send all letters to:

Socialist Review
P O Box 11207
Wellington
New Zealand

Email sr@iso.org.nz

Dear Socialist Review,

In response to the Budget, it does seem a case of rewarding (and discursively producing) the 'good/ideal' model of a working family. One parent is the 'care-giver' and one parent is the 'worker' (or variations around this arrangement). And, in regards to this notion, melds the solo parent's position into this framework; reinforcing that the sole parent is both care-giver and waged worker.

So while the focus on supplementing the working class bypasses addressing low waged work, it also ignores the lived experience and project of child-caring and wage-working for the solo parent. What isn't being considered is whether a sole parent places value on being a full-time parent or, cannot find waged-work. It also doesn't take into consideration whether there are health and/or disabilities at stake for the sole parent and/or child. In other words, it is really only the waged-worker part of the 'working family' concept that is rewarded.

Leaving the work of the care-giver as not being worthy of any 'reward', i.e. they are not recognised 'in-work' and thus invisible.

Therefore, sole parents who are full-time care-givers are discursively 'othered' and produced as the 'bad/not ideal' model of a working family.

There are many children who are going to remain subject to poverty and will miss out on these proposed increases (or, rather incentives!!) as there are many families where (for whatever reasons) the sole parent/two parents is/are the full-time care-giver/s. Makes me hopping mad.

Cheers,
from a sole-parent-DPB-ite/student WORKER!!!!!!!!!!!!

Karin

Hi there,

I'm a member of the Labour party. In spite of what your organisation seems to think about the party, I am a socialist, and did not support the war in Iraq. And, what's more, neither did any of my colleagues that I have spoken to, and neither do any Labour MPs that I have spoken to (I can at least tell you with absolute certainty that Pete Hodgson, Helen Clark, and Michael Cullen all genuinely opposed the war). I have heard barely a whisper within the party suggesting that anybody supported it.

There is this little thing in the world called politics. It may suck, but we rely on the US immensely for trade and for international support. Helen can't just get up and say 'American foreign policy sucks, this war is f**king stupid', unless of course she wants to completely destroy NZ-US

relations, hence causing significant damage to the economy, hence causing significant damage to NZ's workers - that's you & me. As much as we might all be thinking that, diplomacy requires discretion.

Had the UN approved the war, I think that there would still have been a lot of debate as to whether we were going to participate. But I think that most of us knew pretty damn well that the UN wasn't likely to approve of it. 'We don't support the war without UN approval' doesn't necessarily mean we'd support it with UN approval (which is what the Nats essentially said). In hindsight, had the UN approved the war, things probably would have ended up a little tidier in Iraq. Though I'm not saying they should have done so.

The criticism of NZ's sending peace-keeping troops to Iraq also distresses me. The US went into Iraq, basically completely destroyed the country's infrastructure (both political and economic) and then made it completely obvious that they were utterly incompetent of rebuilding it. So they said to the world 'um, help'. The world sighed, and once again got together to clean up the US's mess. Would you rather that we'd all just said 'nah, it's your problem'? That might seem fair, but think about the people of Iraq for a change - did we really

want to leave them to the incompetence of the US? And before you say it - no, our troops aren't blowing up innocent Iraqis - they're mostly engineers. They're under NZ control. The idea that some seem to have that the 'peacekeeping' label is merely propaganda might have some substance if there were any reports of NZ troops participating in hostile conflict, but there aren't. You may suggest that everybody should just get out of Iraq and let them run their own country. Of course, they'd probably end up with a fundamentalist Islamic dictatorship, possibly much worse than Saddam's regime ever was, but that's the will of the people, right?

Regards,
Daniel

PS. You may not like Labour, but ask yourself, what's the realistic alternative?

SR Replies: *Labour is committed to what you call "the economy", and to the international system that goes with it. Socialists see this economy as one historical mode of production, called capitalism. We see this war as a result of an increasingly crisis-ridden economic system. The rampant corruption and militarism of the US is not an aberration, but rather the fundamental features of the system writ large.*

Socialists, strangely enough, propose to replace capitalism with socialism - where the economy is democratically controlled by workers. This requires in the long term a political break with capitalism - revolution - and in the short term, a break with those parties, like Labour, which convince workers to accept the status quo. This means that we always support grassroots resistance against the system, even if we are critical of its political direction. In Iraq for

example, we celebrate the resistance of the Mahdi Army, a Shiite militia, because victory for the US will only spur it on to more bloody adventures. Iraqi resistance can also only succeed if Shiites, Sunnis, etc work together - laying the basis for true democracy. It is obvious that NZ troops (engineers and SAS) are supporting the US invasion, even if the engineers rebuild the occasional school in between fixing British tanks. We call for their withdrawal in order to make the defeat of the US more likely, because that's the only path to a free and democratic Middle East. You can't bomb for democracy.

Dear Socialist Review,

Recently, we attended two protests at Otago University, and were appalled at the complete inadequacy of the organisation undertaken by OUSA for each event. The first protest was a poorly advertised pre Budget march to the office of Pete Hodgson (Dunedin North Labour MP) to "pull the wool over his eyes" as he did to students - in other words, we stuck dacron over his windows. This could have been a good stunt, but due to lack of organisation and advertising, plus leaving the rally before it even started and before people had a chance to gather, it was a flop!

Only 30-40 people turned up, and we almost didn't make it due to the early start. Andrew Cushen (OUSA President) chief rally leader, was late, which wouldn't be so bad except he claims that OUSA doesn't need a Campaigns Coordinator because he can do the job himself!

His inadequacy was reinforced with our second experience of the AUS staff strike and picket. Cushen claimed repeatedly that

OUSA supported the wage claim, and that students should support staff in their negotiations. Then as soon as AUS even mentioned industrial action, he promptly criticised them for striking so close to exams. There was no OUSA presence at the staff picket, yet there were plenty of support from students themselves. Cushen has fallen for the oldest trick in the book - divide and conquer. The 'enemy' in both the fees campaign and the AUS campaign is university managers and government under-funding of education. The best and only way forward is for staff and students to join forces and UNITE AND FIGHT!!!

We urge OUSA to rethink its position in relation to the staff campaign, and we think it is vital that OUSA learn from its mistakes and reinstate the position of Campaigns Coordinator IMMEDIATELY!!!

Regards,
Jamie & Andrew
Dunedin

Dear Socialist Review,

Just trawling the web and came across this article by Brian Roper (*Growing Inequality in Aotearoa*, SR 16). An interesting article to which I reply "So?" What exactly was the point that Brian was trying to get across? That some people actually *earn* money? What part of working hard and *earning* money can't he understand? I'd be quite interested in reading a 'Part 2' to that article, it might actually have a point. Nick Fox

SR Replies: Brian Roper is unavailable for comment at this stage.

Just what are your politics anyway?

You may have noticed that this magazine's politics aren't quite the same as the mainstream media's. So just where do we stand? Below are some of the basic political ideas behind our magazine.

Socialism

Capitalism is a system of crisis, exploitation and war in which production is for profit, not human need. Although workers create society's wealth, they have no control over its production or distribution. A new society can only be built when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and create a new state in which they will make the decisions about the economy, social life and the environment

Workers' Power

Only the working class has the power to create a society free from exploitation, oppression and want. Liberation can be won only through the struggles of workers themselves, organised independently of all other classes and fighting for real workers' power - a new kind of state based on democratically elected workers' councils. China and Cuba, like the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, have nothing to do with socialism. They are repressive state capitalist regimes. We support the struggles of workers against every ruling class.

Revolution Not Reformism

Despite the claims of Labour, Alliance and trade union leaders, the structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class.

They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against workers.

There is no parliamentary road to socialism.

Internationalism

Workers in every country are exploited by capitalism, so the struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle.

We oppose everything that divides workers of different countries. We oppose all immigration controls.

We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose imperialism and support all genuine national liberation struggles.

Liberation From Oppression

We fight for democratic rights. We are opposed to the oppression of women, Māori, Pacific Islanders, gays and lesbians. These forms of oppression are used to divide the working class.

We support the right of all oppressed groups to organise for their own defence.

All these forms of liberation are essential to socialism and impossible without it.

Tino Rangatiratanga

We support the struggle for tino rangatiratanga.

Māori capitalists and politicians have no interest in achieving tino rangatiratanga for working class Māori. The Government and corporate warriors' approach to Treaty claims has benefited a Māori elite while doing little for working class Māori.

Tino rangatiratanga cannot be achieved within capitalism. It will only become a reality with the establishment of a workers' state and socialist society.

Revolutionary Organisation

To achieve socialism, the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by day-to-day activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

We are beginning to build such a party, linking the ideas of revolutionary socialism to workers' struggles against the system. If you agree with our ideas and want to fight for socialism, we urge you to join us.

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